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EXTRACTS

FROM THE

## DIARY OF AN ARTIST.

13p Jack Tupper.

THURSDAY, May 13, 1841.

Finished likeness\* of my sister Mary. Fierce squabbles with the whole family about certain tints of blue in the hair, they averring that every hair in Mary's head is brown. I tremble to think of such difficulties as these in future portrait painting. All tell me I did wrong in Mrs. — 's portrait, putting green about the eyes, "and making a fright of her." What is one to do? green there was, and blue there is: I must paint them. Perhaps people may learn to see some time hence; though this teaching them to see is hard work, meanwhile, and I have lost credit already in the process. Then it wants such immense courage and self-confidence, such overweening vanity, I should say—to fight through it. I sometimes suspect something wrong in the chromatic apparatus of these eyes of mine.

This evening, at Dulwich, now, was there not pure blue, veritable pigment, lying in the furrows? This was no exceptional peculiarity in my vision, because the sunlight was all over the meadows, a rich gold, and where the sun could not shine was in the furrows. What light could get there to save these from being black ?-science answers, as well as my eyes-"no light save that derived from the blue sky," and truly; for there was not a cloud in the whole sky. That field is flat, and not a ray direct, nor indirect, can by possibility get into these furrows: were it not for the blue above they must be totally dark. But the sky sends blue rays into them from nearly its whole concave, "thousands of which, by their angle of incidence," says Dr. Opticus, "can come reflected to my eye." So it is not very marvellous, I see blue here. Now hair is glossy, and a good reflector: I painted Mary in the sunshine; and all the light that got at the dark side of her head was from the north window at the other end of the room, and opposite that from which came my principal light. I did not then look at it, but, no doubt, the light from that further window was blue, in consequence of this clear weather: the reflections were blue accordingly. Hinc illæ lachrymæ! If only some profound Opticus would vindicate us artists! All artists must honestly see these things, if they cannot paint them consistently with bread and cheese. No doubt, my green lady was optically justifiable: no doubt, all these effects that I see are so: but it wants such a very profound science to explain them to the many, and my learned counsel's cases would accumulate so fast, that judgment would go by default.

I'm satisfied to paint what I see, and to explain where I can: this last is not my business, though I do it to quiet some misgivings from time to time. Now they are not

quieted: it must out! The whole truth, when I read it five years hence, may be serviceable. I asked two boys to look into the furrows yonder, and tell me what they saw there. "Nothing"-nothing there, good !-there are no marbles-but you see some color, my boy? "Green, sir." Now the lying young dog said this because he knew there was grass there: neither of them would own to blue. But I'll go back,-I thought, perhaps they are. \*idiopts ?-So your name's Tommy, and yours-Bob? Tommy, tell me the color of Bob's eyes? "Blue." And had I painted Bob's eyes in that place, and as I saw them, there must have been so much green from reflections, that Bob's mother would have assuredly protested against my treatment of her son's eyes. Clear from all this, that we (for the most part) see things as we know them to be, not as they look. We see them with our eyes, receive a sensation, which sensation makes us know them, and think about them; but we don't think about the sensation. In looking at things painted, we think about the sensation, because we can't trust these as we do realities, neither can we shift our point of view whereby to examine them as such.

If I could only be sure of getting a sufficient number of medallions to do. I think these discouraging facts connected with painting would make me lay that aside altogether (that is, till I could afford to paint for myself) in favor of sculpture, in spite of all friend Boughton says about "the folly of marble, when paint is so much more powerful an exponent of Nature." I can't see the force of this argument (though if he feel it, I don't blame him), because whilst I find form utterly beyond my power of mastering, in its fullness, there can be no immediate need of undertaking more. It seems like one abstractedly poetical (the fact pre-supposes he can never be a worker), scrupulously weighing the respective claims of verse, music, painting, or sculpture, before he can determine through which channel to outpour himself upon the world-a task which, by the time he is ready to go out of the world, he may nearly have completed. I might ask him (Boughton), with as much reason as he pleads with, how he can have impudence to add color to yet unperfected form? For it is true. what Galt says, that Art aims not ultimately at quantity. or amount of things (which is objective,-material lumber); but at quality and principle, how simple soever the absolute equivalent of mind. I take it as a good sign, indeed, when I sometimes hear music, and feel it to be superior to painting. A great musician will turn traitor sometimes. and half swear allegiance to poetry. It argues nothing, this inconstancy, save a generous receptivity, and the folly of subordinating the arts one to another, which are all of them, I take it, irresistibly absolute while present. I might aver it less presumptuous, to cope with form simply than to "undertake her with all comers" (i. e., color, light, and shade): but, then, presumption is not here the painter's stimulus; on the contrary, it is a modest faith

<sup>\*</sup> The entry of the commencement of this, and that of other works, are omitted for want of space.—J. T.

Idiopts. This somewhat physiological term, denoting individuals with an imperfect sense of color, may not be generally known.—J. T.

enough:—he shall be able to do something with these powers of light and darkness, that may prove an example, and teach something, though he stumble at every point—he may count, moreover, upon such discomfiture as part of his "devoir"—and he does count upon it when consciously he closes one eye at the onset, and gives his opponent the advantage of the rise, while he chooses to do battle on level ground.

The painter does thus much with many things for the sake of his object; not to show how much he can do with many things: the sculptor does much with one thing, form; vanquishing it utterly for his object; not to show how much he can do; for he copes with it simply, without color or motion, and trusts to the light of heaven to decorate it. I believe, now, that any one attribute which God has impressed upon matter, is sufficient to furnish the mind with an infinity of ideas; for it were uncharitable to suspect a man born with sight only, minus the other senses, should necessarily have a less number of ideas (not notions) than one who has the five senses complete. Sensations are sprays for thoughts to perch upon: I cannot think without words, seen, heard, or imagined; so there must be material for thought to hold to, and then to stand for thought's symbol, in order that the thought may survive: but any one kind of symbol-matter may be split up for ever. The blind may make infinite his aural sensations, or the deaf his visual ones, till he furnish as many counters of thought as he has who possesses both senses. For though the last has twice the number of counters or symbols in store for him, he never may get them all, because they are infinite; for, say I have a million of ideas, and matter (wherewith to represent and mark them) of two kinds-visible and audible; I split each kind of matter into half of a million forms : whereas, if I have only one kind of material representative, I split that into a million; and, if I have a million more ideas, I can repeat the division in both cases, ad infinitum. In like manner, form, the one kind of representative, may be cut into as many symbols of thought as the two kinds, form and color; because they are equally capable of infinite division, since, practically, both are inexhaustible. But Boughton argues, if painting be correct, we have form there as well as in sculpture; which, if granted, affects not the question of superiority between the two arts, because of the aforesaid inexhaustible nature of form alone: for we must ever estimate the capability of an art by how much it is possible that a man may do with it; an angel may make harpstrings speak more definitely than our language! I like, notwithstanding, Boughton's mathematical commencement of the analysis. Let a painting be perfectly correct, and express form as truly as sculpture: and let a sculpture be perfectly correct; -what then? Such a painting has the advantage of color, accessories, etc., which the sculpture has not. But the sculpture, at every change of the observer's position, has an infinite variety of light and shade upon it, and, morever, NATURE'S own illustration of form, viz., real light and shade, which

the painting wants: and this, whether the observer's position be changed or not changed. This, indeed, pushed home, might seem to argue the superiority of sculpture; but it, like the foregoing, has nothing to do with the question, which is settled, as I said, by the first argument, viz., that one mode of matter, be it form modelled, or form painted, carries along with it (in its fullness) an infinite, inexhaustible fund of suggestive mental aliment. There is no doubt, meantime, that we do at intervals sicken of pale form, and gladly take refuge in color, or in sound, or in perfume even, gaining from each, in turn, intelligential stimuli, the need of which is so imperious that he who enjoys not all, and wearies not of them in turn, can never enjoy one with a full relish of hunger.

How can the Arts, then, which continually aid one another mutually, and, though separate, are yet bound together by Nature's invisible vinculum, ever be considered as rivals? The ancients, indeed, in their polytheocracy, made gods oppose one another, and fight for the mastery in Nature, but the muses never did this. I shall not enjoy painting less, if I give up the practice of it for sculpture; nor shall I fear, on the other hand, wasting my talent upon sculpture.

Saturday, May 15th.—Saw at a shop in the road to Westminster, some curious perspective diagrams. They seem to illustrate Parsey's new system, wherein horizontals (as parapet and basement of a terrace), parallels to the plain of the picture, converge to right and left; and the sides of a column, which are parallel, converge to the top of the column. Parsey's error may originate thus: Suppose I stand in front of a terrace, opposite its middle, the terrace upon plain ground and horizontal, and the balusters all of one height, say four feet. If the terrace be a hundred feet long, and I (standing opposite the centre baluster) retire about twenty-nine feet, I shall then be just twice the distance from either of the corner balusters that I am from the centre one, which will, therefore, appear twice as high as the corner ones: that is, when I hold up my crayon to measure (holding it always at the same distance from my eye), if the four feet of the centre baluster be reduced by distance to four inches, the corner ones will be reduced to two inches. And so of the column: let the base be four feet wide, and the top four feet wide, but twice the distance from the eye, by reason of its height; if the base measure four inches on the crayon, the top will measure two inches thereon. And yet, say the old writers on perspective, in spite of this irrefragable reasoning, the corner balusters, in order to appear right, must be painted the same height as the centre one; or the top of the column must be made just the same width as the base, though it appears only half that width. The orthodox writers on perspective knew it was right to do this, and plainly tell us why they knew it, viz., because if they did it otherwise the top of the terrace would seem bent, or the columns would look smaller at top, or the sides of a house appear to fall in: they saw some hitch, however, and

called it "the error in Perspective." Parsey, who is indignant at this, no doubt, and knows truth is stronger than error, boldly draws his corner baluster exactly two inches high, his centre one four inches, and joins them by four straight lines, nobly leaving the intermediate balusters (for truth's sake) to take their chance. His terrace, with parallel sides, is consequently this shape.



Yet we know that the old writers were right, though they did not exactly know why; and, perhaps, their only error in perspective is in the needless use of that word. Their imperfect logic threw them out, but their perfect common sense brought them back again: they left their logic however, for a bait, and Parsey has swallowed it. The logic, indeed, is well enough in itself, and as far as it goes; it is only incomplete. Quite true that objects look less as they recede; quite true that perspective indicates that recession by making them less: but true also that it only does this where it cannot make them recede otherwise. Here is the omission in logic: for perspective can and does make the corner baluster really further off than the centre one, as much as in Nature; and if in Nature the corner looks smaller from being further, in Art it also looks smaller, for the same reason.

ITo make this more intelligible to those not artists. The terrace itself has corner and centre balusters, alike four feet high. And the picture (as drawn properly) has them alike four inches high; in the real the corner appears reduced two feet from being twice the distance of the centre from where you view it; and the same in the picture, the corner appears reduced two inches, because it is twice as far from where you view it as the centre. The difficulty being only in an impression, that we have, of being able so easily to place our eye opposite the corner of the picture, forgetting that this (in proportion) would be equivalent to walking to opposite the corner of the terrace. According to Parsey's rule, you make (in the picture) the corner baluster two inches instead of four inches, and the centre four inches as before: now it is plain in this case that the two inches at the corner of the picture will be reduced to one inch from being still twice as far from the eye as the centre of the picture; and whilst in Nature the objects are (by angular measurement) as two to four, in the picture they will be (by the same measurement) as one to four, and so out of proportion. The calculation of the diarist regarding the supposed distance of 29 feet from the centre, doubling the distance of the angles (founded on the forty-seventh of Euclid), is sufficiently correct, as is also that regarding the reduction of feet to inches, at the distance supposed, consistently with the crayon measurement, or the supposition that the picture is at an ordinary arm's-length from the eye .- J. T.]

To be consistent, Parsey ought to insist that pictureframes be made with pyramidal sides, top, etc., which would be carrying out the pyramid with a vengeance! But it strikes me, the self-imposed sophistry that leads to

this error, is of frequent occurrence in other matters; and might make the subject of sufficient general interest to deserve a paper at the meeting of the Abstract Society. In Art it is this self-same sophistry that vindicates the principle of Focus. Ask a man why he makes, of objects equally light, those in the centre of the picture, the lightest; and of objects of the same tint of color, those in the centre the brightest; and the same of dark objects; he answers, "The centre of the retina is the most susceptible, and feels impressions there with greatest force: Nature does it." He discerns not that, if he does it too, it will be done twice as much as it ought. He forgets, as Galt says, the definition: the definition of what makes a picture, viz., to paint objects so that, when they come to the eue, they will come to it as Nature comes to it. He governs his logic by no reason; he jumbles his categories. He is like the man who argues-" Age is the father of wisdom : without age we are foolish : therefore the sages of the ancient world were wiser than we moderns." Referring first to the lapse of years or age, with which these sages come to our eye, and then ascribing that age to the sages themselves; -- making them old in fact; -- affirming first what is or ought to be the picture at our eye, and then that such ought to be the picture; making it that on the canvas which it is in our eye!

Yes, this ever convenient kind of sophism, truckling to mushroom-logic, seeming a part of what it is no part of ; this ostensible outgrowth and veritable parasite, by the obvious ease wherewith it claims limbship so soon as we lose sight of the root of the matter, must have grown into other things than Art. I must try if I can't do excision upon it where I find this lichen sticking to some sciences: in Art 'tis a blistering sore! Reynolds, who disliked ugliness and disease (and probably death?), is not content with proving them unpleasant, for he foresaw that proof would scarce banish them from Art; but if he could prove them not Nature at all, then the naturalisti must needs give them up: and this, accordingly, he sets about doing, however his catechism said most plainly he was by Nature born in sin (which might have made uglies); however he saw small-pox was an entity in Nature. Let us state his own case, and examine it: "The terms beauty or Nature, which are general ideas, are but different modes of express-. ing the same thing, whether we apply these terms to statues, poetry, or pictures. Deformity is not Nature, but an accidental deviation from her accustomed practice. This general idea, therefore, ought to be called Nature. and nothing else, correctly speaking, has a right to that name. But we are so far from speaking, in common conversation, with any such accuracy, that, on the contrary when we criticise Rembrandt, and other Dutch painters. who introduced into their historical pictures exact representations of individual objects, with all their imperfections. we say: though it is not in good taste, yet it is Nature. This misapplication of terms must be very often perplexing. to the young student. Is not Art, he may say, an imitation of Nature? Must be not, therefore, who imitates her with the greatest fidelity, be the best artist? By this mode of reasoning. Rembrandt has a higher place than Raffaelle. But a very little reflection will serve to show us that these particularities cannot be Nature; for how can that be the nature of man, in which no two individuals are the same?" How? Easily: it is the Nature of the genus homo that no two individuals of that genus should be the same. This is really a characteristic of man since it is a law in physiology that the higher the genus is, the greater will be its individual differences. You, Sir Joshua, have here fabricated a concrete of human perfections, which is purely factitious, and mistake it for something which exists, possibly for that aggregate humanity, which is anything but perfect in your sense. And I think we see the President fitting on his spectacles to ask me, but holding down his ear-trumpet, not to hurry my answer (he is a gentleman, though a sorry logician !) - whether I think one, with Elephantiasis, a natural example of humanity? And I answer that though I do not think such an one a perfect epitome of the genus, I do strictly think him, and maintain him to be, a natural example of humanity : for even though his disease should make him look more like an elephant than a man, that he is capable of sometimes so far resembling that animal is one of the conditions of his being, which circumlocution (by permission of the great Lexicographer) means no more nor less than his nature. I consider, moreover, that while disease leaves never so small a part of him entire, he is a natural example of humanity; and alas!

May 16th.-Sunday, '41.-Determined to be content with treating the above error of Parsey and the sophism involved, as it regards Focus, and Sir Joshua's definition of Nature; without reference to errors in science or other matters, and to leave this latter task to the professedly scientific of our society, putting them merely in possession of the fallacy as it comes under my own experience in Art. where it seems to have a very wide bearing. For it seems to me that, what is called the composition of lines and masses, or, in one word, the composition of a picture, has, in consequence of this self-same fallacy, had assigned to it a position in Art commensurate with an elementary cause of success; whereas, upon strict logical scrutiny, it appears to be only a result of success, i. e., a result of that truthful imitation of natural grouping and gesture, which characterizes persons assembled about an object of interest, in obedience to the interest that such object excites. Can I make this clear to our unartistic members? Perhaps, thus. Suppose an accident in the streets, and one which I witnessed some years since, will do. A child is hanging by its hands to a window-sill, forty feet from the pavement. How it got there is a mystery; but there it is, threatening a fall. Some—the alert ones—have run for a ladder, a feather-bed, or are knocking at the door of the house. But the most part are paralyzed-fascinated !- out of danger, should the child fall, and so, out of reach, they are vet standing tip-toe, with hands up to catch it. All are, more or less, thus:-the sanguine and irritable, with their arms really up; the phlegmatic with theirs a little raised. There is a beautiful repetition of lines in their limbs-a powerful harmonious composition. Now the child is rescued by the window. All their arms fall down, elbows go back, and hands clench to hold the child. There is harmony again: the one cause has harmonized them all. Plant trees together, however dissimilar, the wind that sets in from the east will harmonize them-bend all their arms into balance. It is the one note running through the whole performance, and harmonizing the whole. But, gentlemen, observe what the critic says to this:-- "Composition is the master-key of Art." He examines the composition of groups drawn from Nature, and which have a fine composition because drawn from Nature; and thence lays down what geometric figures best govern the arrangement of masses and lines-the pyramid, the spiral, the ellipse, etc. The artist accordingly designs his composition, and fills in his subject to fit it: whence it comes that his picture has two compositions, fighting with one another to the end; one arising in the working out, from the governing object, as the child hanging from the window; the other from the laws of the critic. The fallacy is in forgetting that this nature-required composition will arise from simply copying the fact of nature: as Parsey's fallacy sprang from forgetting that the optically-required diminution at the angles of the terrace, or the top of the column, would arise equally, without art, by mere registration of the fact. The fallacy is in forgetting the definition of composition, viz., a result or consequence of the presence of certain natural elements, and neither an independent element in Nature, nor an independent element in Art: as Parsey's fallacy, again, was in forgetting the definition of Perspective in behoof of diminution, viz., that diminution stands thereon for distance only when real distance cannot be had; as the fallacy, in the doctrine of Focus, is forgetting the definition of Focus, viz., that it is a subjective phenomenon-in the eye-and that as the eye imparts focal harmony to nature, it must also impart it to the picture: as Sir Joshua's fallacy, with regard to the beauty and nature of man, was in forgetting the definitions of both, and then in sophistically confounding them. For when he says " beauty or nature are but different expressions for the same thing," he forgets that he is in one category of beauty, viz., nature-beauty, i. e., beauty, because it is nature, including the ugliest human specimens that nature makes: for only this category of beauty can make it identical with nature. But when he gets into another category, viz., personal or individual beauty, he expects this to bear the same amount of identifiability with nature as the first, concluding, thereafter, that its categorical opposite, ugliness, cannot be nature at all: whereas though ugliness is the categorical opposite of individual beauty, it is not the categorical opposite of nature-beauty (as defined). And, in the next place, he confounds this nature in man (which, with him, is identical with beauty in man) with the nature of, i.e., the characteristic of man. which is another category of nature-a generic one, relating to man's essential difference from other animals. His confusion is too plain when he asks, "how can that be the nature of man, in which no two individuals are the same?" Thus, then, we have two categories of beauty, and two categories of nature, all mixed up together, and conclusions deduced promiscuously. Strange that the three important doctrines of "selecting from nature," "composition," and "Focus."-not to mention the error in perspective-should all be founded on a like fallacy-the confounding, or forgetting of the very definition!

Is it policy in me, an artist, to talk thus even to my own limited acquaintance? Will it not degrade Art too much? But how can it, if it be truth, and Art be truth? Besides, it is a shame that a strong man, honest and courageous, who won't run away from a cannon, shall stand trembling before a picture, guardedly worming out a critic's opinion before he can venture his own! No! the sooner we are to trust to our eyes, heads, and hearts, the better for all-so here goes!

May 20th.—Thursday.—Went to the R. A. Exhibition this morning, melancholy that so much bad should be with so much good. Returning home took my last sitting for Dr. -- 's medallion, and finished it. Likeness confessed. Cast to-morrow. Here is a subject of intensest human interest. Why should it not be high Art? Why should it not be historical? Xenophon's Cyropædia was thata portrait of his own time-historical? then this is, in spite of the Schools. The rude mould, wherein this head, and these features are cast, is the history of this man's progenitors; aye, and of his parents' parents, for some generations back. The short and broad nose he might not change, nor the bullet-shape of the head, but his brain has made this a capacious skull, and the delicate analysis of odors, roused by no brutal instinct, but guided by sciential search, has made that the nose of a man. The great bridge and broad proportions might indicate, to casual observers, the sign of a low nature, but all that is changeable, and free, has been tempered by a most human usage. Its nostrils have not been inflated with anger, nor often lifted by scorn: yet all this movable portion of the nose, by a little rounding of the lines, might be the nose of a glutton at rest. The mouth is also large and gross; but this only in proportions, and, as it were, by congenital law; for the large lips are governed, tacked up, and moulded as if in defiance of bulk: a tight line girdles the whole margin of the upper—the lower is suspended but in mental suspense. How little would make this an atrocious mouth. The eye, then, in profile only, can one mistake this? Such depth of socket, and quietness of brow! Its orbicular muscle will not close up this eye, even when a day's work has tired the man: he closes his eye when he pleases: it dares not close itself. How many administrations of what a great monarch are inscribed on this half of a forehead. What

histories on histories of slow, gradual conquest-what a cosmos with infinite epochs-what a grander history than the written one of the world!

Now shall I. if God gives me time to read this tablet, though only a part here and there,-shall I give up that task, and take up another, to read a vain story of my own inditing? And shall I, if He gives me eyes and hands to copy it, though only a part here and there, copy that part falsely, and not with a good faith? Why I could swear now in scorn of the world, and of time, and the fashions of men, never to forsake this task (if I have strength), to dream up poor figments the world calls original,-mere. diagrams-Egyptian symbols of men. To be dedicate to this unostentatious service, thought vile and of no repute, were some reward meantime. To copy-merely copy what these inventors cannot see, were some conscientious applause; something to live on while dolls are a-praisinga compensation for wind!

But to think that these inventors take their diagrams and symbols, because they are impotently dumb, and set them out on canvas, like men, to tell a story, whilst my poor realities may not be thus dignified, though speaking an intelligible tongue!

Well, this might be borne, too, for the sake of the ludicrous? but if ever these realities should get into pictures, I think the diagrams will terminate.

## THE GRAVE IN THE BUSENTO.

From the German of Count Platen.

NIGHTLY murmur on Busento, near Cosenza, hollow dirges, And a low, mysterious wailing, answers from his moaning surges.

Stalwart Goths, majestic shadows, up and down their grief go pouring, Alaric, the best and bravest of their nation's dead, deploring.

Far from home, untimely falling, here he claimed their last sad duty, While the locks around his shoulders floated down in youthful beauty.

Now, beside Busento, wielding strong arms red with Roman slaughter.

To a fresh-dug grave they boldly turned aside the rushing water. In the bare and waveless channel, for his rest a grave they

hollowed, And the dead man, armed and mounted, sinking slow, their sad eyes followed.

Then with earth they covered over him and his proud treasure, dreaming How the river-plants, like pennons, over his grave should soon be streaming.

From its course once more diverted, back they led the mighty current:

To his ancient bed Busento thundered in, a foaming torrent.

And it rang in manly chorus: "Hero rest in Glory's keeping! No base Roman's greed shall ever harm the spot where thou art sleeping !"

And the Gothic host deep thrilling swelled the song with wild devotion;

Let thy wave, Buseuto, roll it onward to the farthest ocean!